MS. ALZNER: I'm one of the directors of

Earth Challenge, which I think you all have heard about already, so I'll save on that. I have a story here that I developed with my co-director, Leigh Lytle, that I'd like to read to you.

Imagine you were born into a a society in which everyone 18 or older must participate in an ongoing mountaineering expedition. The purpose of this expedition is to allow you to experience life and liberty to the fullest and to search for happiness. You are told from an early age that you will be led through the expedition by one knowledgeable, able and fair male guide who has a lot of assistants.

On your 18th birthday you show up at the base of the mountain to join the expedition. A fairly sizable group of other beginning mountaineers are gathered around something. You approach them and see that they are all focused on a television screen. On the screen is the talking head of an assistant who is explaining the gear requirements for survival in the unpredictable mountain conditions. The talking head repeatedly emphasizes that the guide and the assistants understand these unpredictable conditions much better than you do, and so you must trust implicitly in all of the

requirements and in all future instructions. "After all," the head says, "We are only looking out for your wellbeing.

According to the requirements you are allowed to carry one backpack that contains the following: clothing and personal items of your choice, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, water bottle, water filter, small first-aid kit, alarm watch, compass, Swiss army knife, Ziploc bags, shovel, headlamp but no batteries allowed because they are known to be a huge source of pollution and toxicity in the environment, and finally a waste containment system available from the mountaineering company. What about food? Well, the talking head soon explains that the guide and his assistants will provide you with one do-it-all, special genetically engineered foot pellet per day, requires no cooking.

Now, what will replace the batteries? And why the waste containment system? Because the mountaineering company behind the guide and his assistantshas developed a special fuel system for headlamps. It works out to be much cheaper than batteries and enables you to achieve independence from the outside marketplace for your headlamp

energy needs. You are directed to the mountaineering company gear store for the acquisition of the required items. Things are reasonably priced, but there is one oddity: the cost of the waste containment system has not yet been determined. You must make an initial payment of $100 for it, but you will receive future bills for a balance as it becomes known.

You begin to resent the waste containment system but remind yourself of the need to trust in the guide and his assistants. You pay your money and receive your gear. The waste containment system is not very big; but as you lift it, your resentment of it becomes official because it weighs at least 30 pounds. And so you now want to know, "Why do we need this system?" And you begin to ask around, but you can't really get a clear answer before it's time for your group to start up the mountain, led by an assistant to the guide.

After six hours of hiking up 4,000 feet with hardly any breaks, your group is told to stop in a heather meadow and get out your shovels. Here you will dig for a mineral used to create the special headlamp fuel. You are confused because you remember reading in your favorite book, Soft Pads:

How to Enjoy the Wilderness Without Harming It, that once an opening develops in the heather cover the plants are unable to close the hole by spreading vegetatively. The disturbance initiates an irreversible cycle of erosion and small bare spots become even larger; and if they are abundant the result is the destruction of the meadow, which could be as much as 10,000 years old. You protest to the assistant, but he informs you that heather meadows are the only place where you can find the needed mineral, and you need fuel for your headlamp more than you need a heather meadow. You find a naturally bare area in which to dig.

It takes two hours to dig deep enough to hit the layer containing the mineral; and as the group members approach this layer, the assistant tells everyone to stop and gather around for an education about the mineral and its use in headlamps. Now you learn that the mineral is actually toxic, and so you are instructed to put the chunks of it in a Ziploc bag. The assistant explains that everyone will carry their mineral sac up another thousand feet to a lake on the mountain. On the lake shore there is a sophisticated processing machine that will use the

lake to isolate the needed mineral from all other impurities and then form battery-shaped fuel cells that will power the headlamp. These cells have a useful life of eight hours and must be disposed of in the waste containment system after use.

The assistant now gives you a pair of paper gloves and a dust mask and explains that the spent fuel cells are much more toxic than they were when new, but the 30-pound waste containment system has been constructed to a standard that protects you from the toxicity of long exposure to the dangerous fuel cells. The assistant assures you that the toxic exposure you will receive during the handling of the mineral in the heather meadow and its use in the headlamp is considered to be an acceptable level, according to the mountaineering company.

MR. LAWSON: You have 30 seconds.

MS. ALZNER: However, he adds as an aside that you should always bring your backpack to the ground gently after taking it off because impact can cause the closure clasps on the WCS to pop open, leading to an irreversible contamination accident. The risk of this is low, though, because conditions in your backpack would have to

be just so.

You are beginning to lose faith in the idea that your guide and his assistants are truly looking out for your wellbeing. So you say to the present assistant, "I would prefer not to use the headlamp at all so that I can avoid this whole process which seems dangerous to me."

The assistant replies, "That is not an option. For the rest of the expedition, we will be traveling at night because the guide and all of the assistants prefer to work in the dark. So you will absolutely need your headlamp and, therefore, this fuel system. And the further function of this aspect of the expedition is that 30 percent of the mineral you collect is given to the guide and his assistants to take care of their fuel needs so that they may concentrate on finding the way for you. As you can see, your participation in this fuel process is essential to the continued functioning of the expedition."

Frustrated, you now ask, "Where is the guide, anyway?"

The assistant answers, "He is route finding. We will catch up with him later. Now please return to your digging."

You do so, but internally vow to dig up more than this mineral. You are determined to understand the full health impacts of this fuel process which is so obviously disrespectful to multiple forms of life. You begin to ask a lot of questions and quickly learn a few additional disturbing facts. The processing of the mineral in the lake leaves the water contaminated, and the lake is your sole source of drinking water on the mountain. An assistant assures you that your water filter removes the contaminants. You know that it does not because you read the instruction manual for the filter, and the lake contaminants are not listed among those the filter is capable of removing.

MR. LAWSON: Excuse me one second. Will you give some idea how much --

MS. ALZNER: Yeah. I just have this much more to read. Thank you.

The assistant maintains that the contaminants are removed by the filter even if they are not in the manual list. You also learn that you will have to dig in the heather field for a mineral supply each morning and process the mineral at the lake each afternoon to provide for your nightly

eight-hour light needs, and the waste containment system only has a capacity of 20 fuel cells. There is a sole repository for the disposal of these cells at the base of the mountain. What this means is that every 20 days you have to hike down 5,000 feet to dump your fuel cells and then hike back up again.

The first time you travel to this repository you discover that it is located on native-American-owned land, and so you must trespass to deposit your spent cells. You don't want to do this, so you're stuck with the cells. You also learn that at extreme temperatures or in humid conditions the waste containment system leaks.

The bottom line is you essentially spend all your time on this mountain as a slave to this fuel process. So what do you do? You begin to instigate a movement among your peers to bring an end to night travel. With daytime travel you eliminate the need for a headlamp and the associated process. In other words, you work with the life giving natural resources rather than with the life taking manmade resources. And if you never can catch up to the guide to tell him yourself and if the assistants are mostly unresponsive, you will

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just need to stop following them and work instead with the people around you to find a new direction in the light. Thank you.

MR. LAWSON: Our next speaker is Mary Olsen, then Valerie Sipp and Rita Kilpatrick.

10